DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 340 962 CG 023 917

AUTHOR Juhasz, Anne McCreary; Yue, Meng
TITLE Significant Others of U.S. White, Black, and Chinese Early Adolescents.
PUB DATE 89
NOTE 11p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Blacks; Catholic Schools; Chinese Americans; Differences; Ethnic Groups; Intermediate Grades; Junior High Schools; *Preadolescents; *Self Esteem; Sex Differences; *Significant Others; Students; Whites

ABSTRACT

Recently the role of significant others in the formation of adolescents' feelings of self-esteem has received considerable attention. This study compared the significant others of White (N=77), Black (N=52), and Chinese American (N=48) 10- to 12-year-old Catholic school students. Subjects were asked to state the first, second, and third, most important persons in their lives and to rate whether that person usually made them feel from very good to bad. For all groups, a larger percentage of boys than girls placed parents as first to third in significance. For Black females, parents as first choice was the lowest percentage. For the first choices, Black males had the highest parent percentage. Rank order of first choice was consistent across sex and race; mother first, father second with one exception, with Black females placing relatives second. When the first three choices were combined, the first choice order prevailed with one exception. For Chinese females, relatives and then mother was the order. Relatives wre much less important to White adolescents, failing to appear in the top-ranking three. For the Chinese, they were extremely important, especially to the girls. Siblings did not emerge as significant others. No Black male or Chinese female viewed a friend as most significant. Teachers were not very significant at all, but when they were, it was for White females and Black and Chinese males. (ABL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED340962

Significant Others of U.S. White, Black, and Chinese, Early Adolescents

Anne McCreary Juhasz Ph.D.,
Professor of Educational Psychology
Loyola University
820 N. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60611

Meng Yue
Changwei Teacher's College
1 Shengli Road, Weifang
Shandong, P.R. China

CG023917

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Anne McCreary Juhasz

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS OF U.S.

WHITE, BLACK AND CHINESE EARLY ADOLESCENTS

Summary - In this study are compared the significant others of 77 White, 52 Black and 48 Chinese American 10 to 12 year olds. Variations among groups reflect gender and cultural differences while similarities support earlier research findings

Recently, the role of significant others in the formation of adolescents' feelings of self-esteem has received considerable attention (Juhasz, 1989; Galbo, 1983; Saltiel, 1986; Watkings & Barrett, 1988). Concurrently, early adolescence (10-12 years) has been identified as a period which has developmental characteristics different from those of later adolescent years (Sprinthall, 1985). One would expect youth at these critical "entry into adolescence" years to be highly vulnerable to feedback. Knowledge of their perceptions of others could provide direction for adults who want to become more significant builders of adolescents' self-esteem. This research compared the significant others reported by the White, Black and Chinese adolescents and the feelings evoked by these persons. Self-descriptions relative to parents and peers were also compared.

METHOD

The subjects were 32 female and 45 male Caucasian, 31 female and 21 male Black, and 21 female and 27 male Chinese American adolescents. They were middle-class, 10-12 years of age,

attending Catholic schools in urban and suburban areas. Each subject was asked to state the first, second and third most important persons in their life, to rate whether that person usually made them feel from very good = 4 to bad = 1, and what that person usually did or said to make them feel good or bad. Subjects were also administered the Parent and Peer sub-scales of Marsh's 1984 Self-Description Questionnaire (SDQ).

RESULTS

The percentages of female and male Caucasians, Black and Chinese adolescents reporting a specific category of person to be (a) their first choice and (b) within their first three choices of significant others are shown in Table 1. For all groups a larger percentage of boys than girls placed parents as first to third in significance. For Black females, parents as first choice was the lowest percentage (61.3%). For the first three choices Black males had the highest parent percentage. Rank order of first choice was consistent across sex and race; mother first, father second with one exception; Black females placed relatives second. When the first three choices were combined, the first choice order prevailed with one exception. For Chinese females, relatives and then mother was the order. Relatives are much less significant to White adolescents, failing to appear in the top-ranking three. For the Chinese they are extremely important, especially to the girls. For Blacks,

significance ranking for relatives fall into the top three for males, females, single and combined choice categories. Siblings did not emerge as highly significant others. About one-third of the subjects in each group designated brother or sister in their first three choices. The one variation was the Chinese, males (55.5%), females (28.6%). No Black male or Chinese female viewed a friend as most significant, and only 9.5% of these Chinese had friend as first to third choice. In contrast 41.9% of the Black females placed friend in this category. Teachers were not very significant at all, but when they were, it was for White females and Black and Chinese males.

Significant differences in how others made the subjects feel were found between first and second choices for Chinese males and Black females. Second choices made subjects feel less good about themselves.

The results of one way analyses of variance indicated significant differences between the three samples ($P<.00$) on the Parent sub-scale of the SDQ but not on the Peer sub-scale. This resulted from lower Chinese female scores.

DISCUSSION

These results are in line with findings which report parents as the most significant influences on children's self-esteem, with mothers consistently more so than fathers. (Blyth, et al., 1982; Rosenberg, 1979; Watkins & Barrett, 1988). However, the gender and cultural differences which emerge are highly relevant.

One would expect parents to be more significant to younger adolescents. But in comparison to Watkins and Barrett's 1988 findings, this was not the case. Their range for mother, choices 1st to 3rd was 90.6% to 95.7%; for father, 71.9% to 91.5%. Our range for mother was 77.4% to 90.5%; for father, 37.5% to 64.4%. It appears that Westernization is negatively correlated to parental significance. Cultural values similar to those found by Nuttall et. al. (1988) in their study of children from the Peoples Republic of China and United States are reflected in this study. Some of the American Chinese were "JOB'S" (Just off the Boat) and all attended a Chinatown school. This important variable together with a more family oriented tradition could account for results.

The significance of relatives to Chinese and Black females, replacing to some extent the mother could reflect family life-style. Black females' choice of friend could signify more advanced socialization. There emerges an interaction profile, uniquely characteristic of the sub-samples in this study. Chinese females are influenced greatly by relatives but not siblings, have few friends, and feel less good about self in relation to parents. Chinese boys' fathers make them feel worse about self than do their mothers. Some have friends, relatives and siblings who are important. For Black girls, friends and relatives are important although relatives don't make them feel as good as mothers do. However, fewer of them see mother as significant. Girls' significance "rating" for fathers in this

study is frighteningly low, fewer than 50% of any group mentioned father compared to about two-thirds of the boys. Nor do teachers in any way fill the significance gap for these young people.

Either our assumptions about the significance of others in the development of self-esteem is erroneous or early adolescents do not have a network of family members, teachers and others who function in ways which make them seem important.

REFERENCES

Blyth, D., Hill, J., & Thiel, K. (1982). Early adolescents' significant others: Grade and gender differences in perceived relationships with familial and non-familial adults and young people. Journal of Youth and Adolescents, 11, 425-450.

Galbo, J. (1983). Adolescents' perceptions of significant adults. Adolescence, 70, 417-427.

Juhasz, A. (1989). Significant others and self-esteem: Methods for determining who and why. Adolescence, (in press).

Marsh, H. (1984). Self-description questionnaire (SDW): An instrument for measuring multiple dimensions of pre-adolescent self- concept. Sydney Australia: Department of Education.

Nuttall, E., Li, C., & Nuttal, R. (1988). Views of the family by Chinese and U.S. children: A comparative study of kinetic family drawings. Journal of School Psychology, 26, 191-194.

Rosenberg, M. (1979). Conceiving the self. New York: Basic Books.

Saltiel, J. (1986). Segmental influence: The case of educational and occupational significant others. Adolescence, 21, 615-622.

Sprinthall, N. (1985). Early adolescents and opportunities for growth in the 1980's: Ships passing in the night, again. Journal of Early Adolescence, 5, 533-547.

Watkins, D., & Barrett, R. (1988). Significant others of New Zealand and Filipino adolescents. Psychological Reports, 62, 588-590.

TABLE 1

Percentages of Respondents Reporting A Category of Persons To Be Their First Choice And Within Their First Three Choices of Significant Others By Race and Sex

Category of Persons	American				American Chinese				American Blacks			
	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
	n .45		n.32		n.27		n.21		n.21		n.31	
	1st	1st-3rd	1st	1st-3rd	1st	1st-3rd	1st	1st-3rd	1st	1st-3rd	1st	1st-3rd
Mother	66.7	77.8	81.3	87.5	51.9	85.2	61.9	90.5	61.9	85.7	54.8	77.4
Father	13.3	64.4	3.1	37.5	29.6	63.0	19.0	47.6	14.3	71.4	6.5	48.4
Sister	2.2	6.7	3.1	18.7	3.7	25.9	0.0	14.3	0.0	14.3	0.0	16.1
Brother	6.7	24.4	3.1	15.6	0.0	29.6	0.0	14.3	4.8	23.8	0.0	19.4
Relative	4.4	31.1	3.1	21.9	7.4	48.1	9.5	100.0	4.8	33.3	12.9	54.8
Friend	6.7	35.6	6.3	34.4	7.4	25.9	0.0	9.5	0.0	28.6	6.5	41.9
Teacher	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.3	0.0	3.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.3	0.0	0.0
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.7	9.6	19.0	0.0	0.0	3.2	6.5